



Blake & Stephanie





Hello!

Thank you for considering our family. We hope to provide you with some information about us in this book so you can get a better idea of us.

We have been married since 2010. We were both born in 1988 and raised in Oregon. After struggling with infertility and the loss of Blake's mom, we realized how much love we have to share with a child. Our wish is to be parents in an open adoption, building a relationship of trust and respect as we share love for a child.

Thank you for reading,

Stephanie & Blake

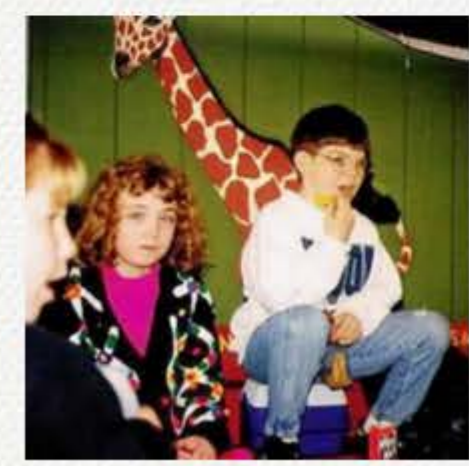




About Us

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We met in kindergarten at Mrs. B's AM class, where we learned we share the same birthday. Blake is a few hours older than Stephanie (though born in different towns). We got teased as kids because of that, so we ignored each other throughout middle and high school. It wasn't until college that we started dating, all because of Blake's mom. Right before Thanksgiving 2008, Stephanie and her mom ran into Blake's mom, Jenny, at the grocery store where she worked. Jenny shared with us that Blake had started up at OSU, after finishing two years at the community college. Why don't you connect? Stephanie found Blake on Facebook and friended him. We started chatting, then had a lunch date the Tuesday after Thanksgiving. The rest, they say, is history. We got married in our hometown in August 2010, surrounded by our family and friends. In May 2011, we moved and bought a house in the mid-valley. Since then, Blake's brothers and their families have moved to the same town, with Stephanie's family just down the road. Over the years of our marriage, we have grown better and stronger together.



Blake

Blake grew up the middle son of three boys. He loved his childhood, where his passion for building things developed. He and his dad would build and repair things. He also loves adventure. Growing up, the boys would ride dirt bikes and go camping. Now he gets to go on motorcycle trips with his dad and camp under the stars. In high school, he worked hard in his technical courses and won state and national championships in Skills USA. He graduated from OSU in mechanical engineering and works for a company that builds highly technical machinery. He loves the challenge of fixing production problems as they come up.



Blake's Favorites:

Movies: Days of Thunder, Back to the Future trilogy, Iron Man

TV Shows: Top Gear, Fresh Off the Boat, MeatEater, The Ranch

Books: Jack Reacher series, How High the Bounty

Music: Country, Johnny Cash

Hobbies: building in his shop, motorcycle rides, brewing beer, playing board games, having family BBQs, riding mountain bikes

Fun Facts about Blake

- He taught himself how to ride a unicycle. It started as a competition with his brothers, which motivated him to be the best!
- In middle school, he saved up money from his 4H lamb to purchase his own welder, which he still has to this day
- He comes from a family of racers, including his grandpa, dad, mom, uncles, and cousins. He has enjoyed a few seasons of racing with his dad and uses his mom's number in her honor
- He barely passed Spanish. Having not taken a foreign language in high school, he learned he had to take two terms in college instead. With excellent tutoring from Stephanie and hard work, he passed his last year of college
- He skipped his high school prom and went to the dunes to ride dirt bikes instead
- He's only been to one other country, Canada. He visited his dad's cousins who live outside of Vancouver, BC. We also stopped in Victoria on our honeymoon. He's considering traveling to Italy or Scotland with Stephanie for our 40th birthday
- He became an engineer after a childhood of asking every adult around him "why" over and over again. He continues to have a drive to figure things out and understand how they work
- He jokes that he came into the marriage with barely any clothes. Working in the shop tends to leave rips and stains on his clothes. He's very grateful for Stephanie and her mom who are his "shoppers"
- He says he is the closest of his brothers with his step mom. When his dad started dating her, they joked she was his dad's "penpal", which is still how her number is saved in Blake's phone



Stephanie

Stephanie grew up the oldest of two girls. Her family had adventures on road trips, driving to visit family and Disneyland, and going on camping trips. She loves music, learning the piano first, playing the flute in middle school band, then joining choir in high school. She worked hard in school, attending the local community college while in high school. She graduated from OSU with a degree in accounting and worked as an auditor at a public firm for a few years before they moved to the mid-valley. Since then, she has loved working in higher education accounting. She feels that her work positively impacts the campus community, including students, instructors, and researchers.

Stephanie's Favorite:

TV Shows: Parks & Rec, West Wing, Gilmore Girls, Ted Lasso, Community, Brooklyn 99, Only Murders in the Building, The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, Kim's Convenience

Movies: Princess Bride, Pride & Prejudice (2005), Crazy Rich Asians, Ever After, You've Got Mail, Emma. (2020), Knives Out, Logan Lucky, Sense and Sensibility (1995)

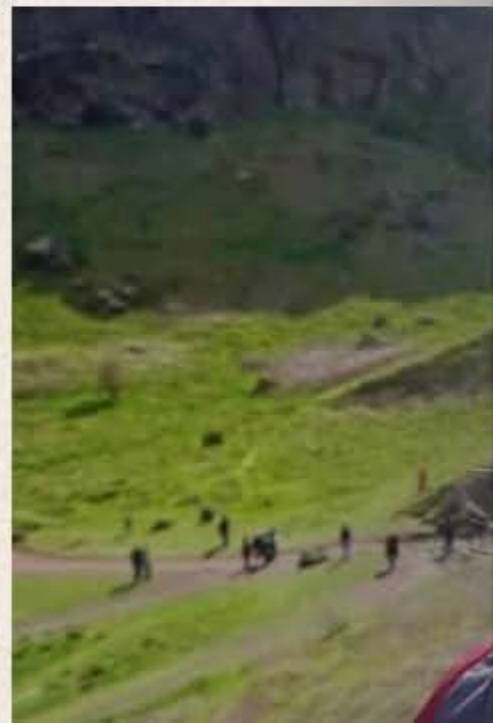
Music: NEEDTOBREATHE, Mat Kearney, Parachute, Taylor Swift, Switchfoot, Ed Sheeran

Author: Jane Austen (favorite book is a tie between Pride & Prejudice and Persuasion)

Book Genres: regency romance, cozy mysteries, investigative journalism nonfiction

She also enjoys:

- picking and canning local fruit, such as marionberry pie filling, strawberry jam, and salsa
- knitting, especially a favorite blanket pattern that is easy to do while watching TV
- hiking with a view using William Sullivan's Oregon 100 Hikes series
- drinking herbal teas such as Metolius's Little Bear
- sampling Oregon cider like 2 Towns or Avid
- running a 10K, lifting weights, kayaking, mountain biking, and yoga



Fun Facts about Stephanie

- In middle school, she met the last man on the moon, astronaut Eugene Cernan. She had won a short story contest and also got an autographed copy of his book
- In April 2022, she met the hosts of her favorite podcast, The Popcast with Knox and Jamie and was nervous the **WHOLE** time. Their podcast makes her laugh each Wednesday since she started listening in August 2017. It was so fun watching and laughing at the live show
- She has traveled to Washington DC twice, once in fourth grade with her grandparents and once in college with a student group. Stephanie got her minor in political science and enjoys analyzing politics. She looks forward to going back with Blake and our child someday to see the monuments, Air and Space museum, and political center of our country
- In fifth grade, she went with her grandparents to Australia for a month. While there, she stayed with her penpal for two weeks and attended school with her while her grandparents attended a work conference in another city. She loved going to the beach while there!
- Blake taught her to drive a manual and back up a trailer, which really impresses her family
- An Enneagram 5, she strongly identifies with the core desire to be capable and competent
- She was once kicked out of a casino that she was auditing since she was only 20 and couldn't be on the floor for the cash count
- She stopped eating gluten and drinking caffeine in 2007. Neither seem to like her body, but she does get to enjoy decaf and herbal drinks as well as gluten free foods
- As a teenager, she worked summers as a lifeguard and swim instructor (she loved teaching kids how to swim). She made the varsity swim team her junior year. Her favorite is the breaststroke, which isn't the fastest but takes a lot of technique



Stephanie's Family



Stephanie's family lives about a mile down the road. Her dad and younger sister are both civil engineers, so she jokes she's surrounded by engineers. Her family loves to travel and share experiences together.



Blake's Family

Blake's older brother and wife have three children (a boy, then twin boy and girl). Blake's younger brother and wife have a daughter born in August 2022. Both families live in the same town as us. Blake's dad and step mom married in 2020 and live in our hometown, a couple hours south. They visit often, with all of us coming together for family dinners.





Jenny

Blake's mom, "Mimi" to her grandkids, passed away in January 2016 after battling ovarian cancer for over four years. She was such a strong, beautiful woman, who had an amazing singing voice. We miss her light in our lives and will share Mimi's memory with our child.



Harley & Bernadette



Harley has been with us since July 2011 when he was only 10 weeks old. Bernadette joined us in November 2019 at two years old. They are both sweet, gentle labradoodles. Harley has the energy, while Bernadette has the snuggles. We take them on walks around our neighborhood as well as local hikes. They enjoy hanging out with family and friends, getting to play and snuggle.





Exploring Oregon

We love living in Oregon and hope to share the great outdoors together. We look forward to camping with family and friends, road trips to see cool new places, hiking into wilderness areas, and learning history along the way.

Stephanie grew up hiking with her dad, which she has shared with Blake. For his part, Blake grew up riding dirt bikes at the coast or in Eastern Oregon. We both enjoy mountain biking, especially around Oakridge, where Stephanie's mom grew up.

We also hope to experience other places farther from home, broadening the child(ren)'s perspectives and compassion for others in our community and the greater world.

Our Extended Family & Friends

We have great extended family. Blake has many cousins back in our hometown that we love to visit, especially for traditional Christmas gatherings. From a smaller family, Stephanie always enjoyed getting to spend time with her cousins (all girls on her dad's side). We still get together a few times a year to hang out. Our local friends are so supportive and excited for us to expand our family. We get to go on wine tastings, outdoor theater, and college sports.



Traditions

Our favorite traditions start in November. Stephanie's parents host Thanksgiving just down the road. She takes the day before off to help her mom with prep food. Blake's oldest nephew's birthday is that weekend, so we usually get together later, especially to watch the Oregon / Oregon State football game or to go up to the snow to get a tree.

In December, we watch a fun small downtown parade. We have our "friendsgiving". We have competitions to see who can wrap presents best. Traditionally, we then start the marathon. First is the visit to Portland with Stephanie's dad's side of the family. Then down to our hometown for Blake's extended family gatherings. Since we got our new home in 2019, we have been hosting Christmas with Blake's immediate family. We've enjoyed hosting and still include the traditional prime rib!

New Years is quiet, usually spent with Stephanie's family friends and playing board games. Sometime around then, we try to take a trip. We've gone to the coast for whale watching. Stephanie loves to visit Disneyland in mid-December with all the Christmas decorations.



Blake's favorite time of year is Spring, particularly May around our birthday. He loves how the days start to get longer. We also get to start the garden, which has been growing in recent years.

Summer is for getting outside. Stephanie's work requires longer hours in late June and early July, but after that, it is time to enjoy summer in Oregon. Blake enjoys an annual motorcycle camping trip with his dad. We also get to kayak or paddle board on the Willamette or nearby lakes with family.

As the weather starts to turn in the fall, we enjoy evenings inside. We get to play board games either just the two of us or with friends. Stephanie picks apples at a local orchard and cans apple pie filling with her sister. Blake starts working in the shop on a new project. And we get ready to approach a new year together.



Our Home

In late 2019, we moved across town to a four bedroom house with a shop that Blake loves. Our home is located on a street near great schools and parks. The dogs enjoy walking around the neighborhood.

Our town has great local shops and restaurants, and we love buying fresh food from the farmers market. We also attend a church downtown. The church loves people and Jesus, and we enjoy building our faith with this community.



Hopes & Dreams for Our Child

Stepping into new roles as parents, we hope to provide our child with love and support, guiding them to become caring and capable adults. Living close to family and working in jobs that allow for work/life balance is something we've valued from early in our marriage and hope will benefit us as our family grows.

We will share our Christian faith, following Jesus and loving others. We will model our values in serving our community. We desire to share a fully lived out faith with our child.

We hope to help them as they grow, giving them educational opportunities. We look forward to supporting our child as they participate in sports, music, or other extracurricular activities. These were so important to our childhoods, and we are excited to cheer them on as they learn and grow.

As we have been waiting for our family to expand through adoption, we know there is a lot we don't yet know. In the end, we look forward to adjusting together with our child's birth family.



Open Adoption Aspirations Together in Love

At the top of the stairs of our house is the bedroom we are turning into the nursery. As we put together this space, we also keep our hearts open to our child and their first family.

Over the years of waiting in adoption, we've been able to read books on parenting and open adoption. Some things we look forward to using are pictured above: a blanket Stephanie knitted, an adoption life journal, and "Tell Me Again About The Night I Was Born" picture book.

We believe having an open adoption will be so beneficial for our child. Sharing with our child their story from the very beginning is so important to us. At the same time, we honor the child's own story and have mostly kept off of social media about adoption. By not sharing widely this way, we feel we are protecting a personal part of our child's story. We want to honor and create space for them to choose their own details to share.

We hope to build a lifelong relationship together with our child's birth parents. We know we can build this on the shared love of our child. From our perspective, we'll also be bringing respect and honoring the first family. Having never been parents, we are coming into adoption humbly.

We've been relating an open adoption relationship with a birth family as similar to Blake's extended family. His parents are each one of six biological children, then added step siblings. Over the generations, his family has expanded greatly. When Stephanie joined the family, it took years for her to figure out how the connections were all made. His family saw divorce as an end to a marriage, not an end to step children being part of their family. This "big tent" idea is how we envision adoption: all together in love.

Thank you

Thanks again for reading our book. Hopefully it has helped give you a sense of who we are. As we navigate an open adoption relationship, we look forward to building a life of love for a child.

